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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 002721

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/MARCHESE/HARDING

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [LE](#) [AR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: ARMENIAN PARTY OPPOSES TURKISH DEPLOYMENT  
TO UNIFIL

Classified By: Jeffrey D. Feltman, Ambassador. Reason: 1.4(d).

SUMMARY

1. (C) The largest Armenian-Lebanese political party, the Tashnag, opposes deployment of Turkish troops as part of an augmented UNIFIL in southern Lebanon. On August 18, the Tashnag sent a petition to the Ambassador listing its concerns. Poloff also discussed the issue with Tashnag Member of Parliament Hagop Pakradounian on August 22. Pakradounian said that the Tashnag has also raised its concerns with PM Fouad Siniora, Speaker Nabih Berri, President Emile Lahoud, and with the office of the UNSYG's Personal Representative in Lebanon, Geir Pedersen. The Ambassador will meet with representatives from the Tashnag party, including Pakradounian, on August 24. While the majority of the 150,000 Lebanese of Armenian descent live in and around Beirut, there is a small pocket in the eastern Bekaa valley town of Aanjar (formerly the site of Syrian intelligence headquarters in Lebanon), near the border with Syria. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) On August 18, the Embassy political section received a petition addressed to the Ambassador from the central committee of the Tashnag party expressing the party's opposition to the potential deployment of Turkish troops as part of an expanded UNIFIL (though it supports UNSCR 1701). Below is an excerpt from the text:

BEGIN TEXT:

Having the positive and welcoming consideration of the 11th point of the UNSCR 1701 regarding the deployment of international peacekeeping forces in South Lebanon, we would like to invite your kind attention to the serious issue of including Turkish army units in the proposed peacekeeping forces, which might disturb the efforts that are put forward till now or will be engaged in the future to bring peace and stability within the Lebanese society and the south of the country in general.

3. A. We strongly believe that any participant force in the UNIFIL should at least enjoy a neutral position with all parties of conflict; the Turkish government has long ago lost its neutrality and any possible role of mediation since the mid-1990s when it has signed military cooperation agreements with Israel and participated in the deterrence of the Arab

World.

1B. Turkey's hostile foreign policy in the region, especially, with its immediate neighbors is valid evidence to prove our concerns regarding Turkey's peacekeeping missions in the south of the country. Furthermore, Turkey still occupies northern Cyprus, continues to blockade Armenia, and denies recognizing the Armenian genocide.

1C. Turkey's Human Rights record, poor respect of law, violations of the rights of minorities, and most of all, its army's interference in politics does not qualify it to participate in UNIFIL's highly delicate and challenging mission.

1D. We strongly believe that any participant force in the UNIFIL should be welcomed by the whole Lebanese society; the Turkish record of persecution and authoritarian rule in Lebanon has left deep scars in the collective memory of the Lebanese people.

1E. We, as Lebanese from Armenian origin, and as a large part of the Lebanese society, have long suffered from the Turkish massacres and Genocide; therefore we do oppose any Turkish participation in UNIFIL; the Armenian Genocide in 1915 and our presence in Lebanon since then speaks volumes.

Today, we firmly believe that Turkey's readiness to send peacekeeping forces to Lebanon would jeopardize the neutrality of the UNIFIL and distract its peacekeeping objective. Therefore, we come forward to share with you our concerns and objections to such a desire by the Turkish government.

BEIRUT 00002721 002 OF 002

On behalf of the Lebanese-Armenian citizens we call on your country, as a member of the Security Council, to oppose any deployment of Turkish troops on the Lebanese soil.

END TEXT.

13. (C) Poloff spoke with Tashnag MP Hagop Pakradounian on August 22 to review the party's concerns. Pakradounian reiterated the party's objection to a Turkish deployment based on Turkey's "history of genocide." He added that Lebanon is moving into a "reconciliatory phase," and that nothing should be done now to upset any of the confessional communities in Lebanon. Poloff asked if Pakradounian had raised his party's objections with anyone else in the Lebanese government, and he replied that the Tashnag has spoken with PM Siniora, Speaker Berri, and President Lahoud, as well as the office of UN representative Geir Pedersen. From Pakradounian's account of their meeting, Siniora was sympathetic to Armenian-Lebanese concerns but unwilling to oppose any Turkish deployment since these forces would be a critical element in an augmented UNIFIL force. Pakradounian said that Tashnag representatives have met with several embassies, and have requested a meeting with the French embassy, with no reply as yet.

14. (C) The Ambassador and poloff will meet with a Tashnag delegation, including Pakradounian, on August 24. While we will take note of the Armenian-Lebanese concerns, we will reiterate that the USG does not intend to veto any particular nation's contribution to the augmented UNIFIL (which is also the position of the Lebanese government). We would welcome any additional insights from the Department and Embassies Yerevan and Ankara before this meeting.

15. (C) Comment: The Tashnag in Lebanon has traditionally allied itself with the Lebanese presidency, not so much for ideological reasons but in hopes of garnering protection for a small, non-Arab minority. For the same reasons, the Tashnag joined Michel Aoun's electoral alliance for the May-June 2005 legislative elections, and MP Pakradounian is

part of Aoun's bloc. That means that the Tashnag's current allies -- Emile Lahoud and Michel Aoun -- are themselves allies of Hizballah. But we believe that the Tashnag's concerns about Turkish participation are sincere, not rooted in some attempt to protect Hizballah by opposing UNIFIL deployment. End comment.  
FELTMAN